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THE FAITHFUL MINISTERS OF JESUS CHRIST, THANKFUL TO HIM FOR THEIR OFFICE.

A

SERMON,

DELIVERED AT SOUTHAMPTON, (*MASSACHUSETTS*)

AUGUST 26, 1801—AT THE

ORDINATION

OF THE

REVEREND VINSON GOULD,

TO THE *WORK OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY IN THAT PLACE*.

COLLEAGUE PASTOR

WITH THE

REVEREND JONATHAN JUDD.

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AN

Ordination Sermon.

I. TIMOTHY, I. 12.

"*And I thank Chriſt Jeſus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the Miniſtry.*"

THESE words were uttered by the Apoſtle *Paul*. This remarkable man was a Jew by birth, he received the higheſt education which Jeruſalem afforded, and belonged to the numerous and popular ſect of the Phariſees. He was firſt known by the name of *Saul*. The writer of the Acts of the Apoſtles, firſt mentions him as a young man that was preſent when the martyr Stephen was put to death, and as an approver of the horrid deed. Before his converſion he was an open blaſphemer of the chriſtian doctrine, and he breathed out threatenings and ſlaughter againſt the diſciples of the Lord. In the midſt of his perſecuting rage, he was arreſted by the Saviour, was chang-

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ed into a warm friend, and became a preacher of the faith which once he deſtroyed.

He was the moſt ſucceſsful inſtrument that hath been raiſed up, in the propagation and defence of the Redeemer's kingdom. He had a deep and abiding ſenſe of the riches of divine grace. Hence, he was led to utter himſelf, as in the context, "This is a faithful ſaying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Chriſt Jeſus came into the world to ſave ſinners; of whom I am chief." His mouth was filled with praiſe, for that wonderful mercy which was diſplayed in his converſion, and in putting him into the office of the chriſtian miniſtry: *I thank Chriſt Jeſus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the miniſtry.*

Since the men whom the head of the Church hath raiſed up and qualified, in every age, to preach the Goſpel, have been all made to drink into one ſpirit, it is manifeſt,—That all the faithful miniſters of Jeſus Chriſt are thankful to him for their office.—This will appear, from conſidering their character, and their privileges.

I. Let us attend to the character of the faithful miniſters of Jeſus Chriſt.

The miniſters who are faithful in the eyes of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, have the ſame general character as his other true diſciples: But ſince their truſt is of a higher nature, and their ſervices are more important and difficult, it is proper to inquire into their diligence in accompliſhing themſelves for their work; their activity; their fortitude and patience; and their dependence on divine grace.

1ſt. Let us conſider the diligence of the faithful miniſters of Jeſus Chriſt, in accompliſhing themſelves for their work.

It is neceſſary that miniſters of the goſpel have more knowledge than chriſtians in general. Without this they cannot be qualified to enlighten the ignorant, reclaim

claim the erroneous, and defend the faith which was once delivered unto the ſaints againſt gainſayers. None have ſhined as ſtars of the firſt magnitude in the church of God, who have not been diſtinguiſhed by their mental powers, and literary improvements. Moſes and Paul, will be at once recollected, in this place, as examples. It is true, that moſt of the Apoſtles were deſtitute of a learned education, but that defect was ſupplied, and more than ſupplied, by miraculous gifts. If any will plead that an acquaintance with literature is now unneceſſary in public teachers, from the caſe of the Apoſtles, they may be convinced of their miſtake, by comparing illiterate men *without* the miraculous gifts of knowledge and wiſdom, with thoſe who *had* theſe, and the gift of tongues, immediately from on high. Let the advocates for an unlearned miniſtry produce illiterate men, of the preſent age, or of any other ſince inſpiration ceaſed, who appear like the gifted fiſhermen of Galilee, or give up the argument from the caſe of thoſe ancient inſpired men. The moſt ſtudious and learned public teachers, who have lived ſince the deceaſe of the Apoſtles, have fallen far behind thoſe primitive miniſters, in their accompliſhments. In what light then muſt thoſe teachers appear whoſe minds are wholly uncultivated?

Though an aptneſs to teach muſt be the gift of the God of nature, and cannot, therefore, be acquired by reading and ſtudy, yet where it is poſſeſſed, it can be greatly improved by cloſe and perſevering application. It is too plain to need proof, that men are made to differ from each other much more by education, than by native ſtrength of mind. *Baxter*, *Owen*, *Edwards*, and other eminent divines, would not have been what they were, had they not practically regarded Paul's charge to Timothy—"Give attendance to reading. Neglect not the gift that is in thee. Meditate upon theſe things; give thyſelf wholly to them."* This charge lieth with great

* 1 Timothy, iv. 13, 14, 15.

great weight on the mind of every paſtor to whom Chriſt ſaith, "Feed my lambs—Feed my ſheep." He will not only ſtudy to find the beſt arguments, to ſupport the truth and inſpiration of the bible againſt infidels, but he will ſeek to acquaint himſelf with the doctrines of revealed religion. He will, with a humble and devout temper, ſit at the feet of Jeſus, to hear his words, and to learn how to warn every man, and teach every man in all wiſdom. With the ſtudy of the ſcriptures muſt be joined the ſtudy of the human heart. The word of truth unfolds the character of God, and lays open the character of man. It muſt be attended to in relation to both theſe ſubjects, to form the diſciple, and much more, the miniſter of Jeſus Chriſt. Without a good degree of this kind of knowledge, no man can be qualified rightly to divide the word of truth, and to give to all their portion in due ſeaſon.

The holy ſcriptures contain a rich treaſure of wiſdom and knowledge. Theſe writings carry all the marks of authenticity, and of divine inſpiration. They commend themſelves as being from above, to all who ſearch them with honeſt hearts. The more fully we attend to the ſtate and the wants of man, and to the natural and civil hiſtory of the world, the clearer will be the evidence that the Bible proceedeth from the father of lights. The ſublime and pure nature of the plan of religion which is contained in this book, forbids aſcribing its origin to any human being. No being but Jehovah, can be the author of a religious ſyſtem, which deſcends to the loweſt capacity, and at the ſame time riſes above the comprehenſion of the moſt enlarged finite underſtanding.

The ableſt miniſter who begins in early life faithfully to ſearch the ſcriptures, and is continued to old age in this employment, will appear to himſelf to do nothing more than juſt to touch upon the doctrines revealed in them. To be able to furniſh milk for babes, and ſtrong meat for them that are of full age, the

chriſtian

chriſtian paſtor muſt apply himſelf to reading and meditation, with great diligence. Great ſkill is neceſſary to lead him to make a wiſe improvement of the various paſſing events in divine providence, for the awakening and comfort of his flock.

It is manifeſt from a brief ſurvey of the employment of the chriſtian miniſter, that great mental exertion is neceſſary to qualify him for his work. A conſiderable proportion of the longeſt life muſt be ſpent in preparing him to enter upon it; and after entrance, the moſt able ſcribe will find his attainments to be ſmall; and this conviction will continue to increaſe, ſo long as he faithfully applies himſelf to ſtudy.

2d. The faithful miniſters of the goſpel, are active in the ſtation in which they are placed. They are ſtiled, in ſcripture, *labourers*, and *watchmen*; and, therefore cannot ſupport the miniſterial character, if they indulge themſelves in indolence. They are commanded to "preach the word; to be inſtant in ſeaſon, and out of ſeaſon; to reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all long-ſuffering and doctrine."* The Apoſtle Paul was abundant in labours. He preached the unſearchable riches of Chriſt; he gathered churches, and he ſought their edification with unwearied diligence. "He kept back nothing that was profitable unto his hearers. He taught them publickly, and from houſe to houſe. He ceaſed not to warn every one night and day with tears."

The church is in a moſt alarming ſtate, when her profeſſed watchmen give themſelves up to ſlumber. Then is the time for the enemy to ſow tares among the wheat; by introducing corrupt doctrines, and licentious manners. The hearts of the godly will be made ſad; and the wicked will triumph. The faithful miniſter of Jeſus Chriſt watches and prays, that his doom may not be that of the evil ſervant, who ſaith in his heart, "my lord delayeth his coming," and gives himſelf

* 2 Timothy, iv. 2.

ſelf up to the gratification of his luſts. The men who feel themſelves charged to watch for ſouls, as they that muſt give account, will be ſtirred up to perform the arduous duties of their ſacred function. They will be humbled for their ſins as men, and as miniſters; and will reſolve, in the ſtrength of the Lord, to labour and faint not. They will not be turned aſide by the meaſures, the riches, and the honors of the world; but will "follow after righteouſneſs, godlineſs, faith, love, patience, meekneſs."

How can the ſervant of the Lord be idle in the vineyard, when he looks on the precious ſouls committed to his charge? and hath an impreſſive ſenſe of the numerous ways in which he is commanded to labor for their everlaſting good? He muſt be very ſtupid, if he feels that he has little to do, while the powers of darkneſs are inceſſantly and violently engaged, to ſtrengthen their intereſt in the hearts of the children of diſobedience, and to lead them on to everlaſting deſtruction. The ſeaſon in which the miniſter can ſpeak, and the opportunity in which men can hear, are both very ſhort, and uncertain. The preſent day, or hour, may be the laſt. Let the meſſenger of the Lord of hoſts realize theſe things, when he enters the ſanctuary, and when he has acceſs to his fellow-mortals on other occaſions. Let him remember the travail of Chriſt's ſoul for the ſalvation of ſinners, and view, and review, the activity and zeal which he diſplayed in his public miniſtry. I proceed to conſider,

3dly. The fortitude and patience of the faithful miniſters of Jeſus Chriſt. Since they have difficulties to encounter, and afflictions to endure, in common with their fellow-diſciples, they ſtand in need of fortitude and patience. Theſe virtues are of peculiar importance to them; as they are more expoſed than others to the fury of the wicked, and have heavy burdens to bear, in other reſpects, on account of the work in which they

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are engaged. Paul exhorted Timothy to "endure hardneſs, as a good ſoldier of Jeſus Chriſt."*

Fortitude is neceſſary, to withſtand the attempts which are made to ſhut the mouths of miniſters, from reproving prevailing errors and faſhionable vices; and to render them undaunted at the ſcoffs, the threatnings, and other malevolent efforts of the hardened ſons of iniquity. Reſtrained as the wicked may be by education, and other means, they are ſeen, in not a few inſtances, openly to diſcover their averſion to the purity of the goſpel, and to its miniſters; eſpecially when the evil and danger of their way are expoſed, and are ſet before them by ſerious expoſtulation. It is no rare thing for perſons to aſſent to the truth with their underſtandings, and to feel its force, for a time, on their conſciences, and yet, in the end, become hardened in ſin, and give themſelves up to work iniquity with greedineſs. Whoever bears public, decided, and perſevering teſtimony againſt the ſpirit of this ungodly world, muſt expect to feel the effects of its malice. Tho' the hand of violence may be withholden, as it is in ordinary times, the ſcourge of the tongue muſt be expected. How many, and how painful were the afflictions which fell to the lot of the Apoſtles? Paul was treated as if he had been a malefactor. He ſuffered even unto bonds. But he was inſpired with courage and joy, in that the goſpel was proclaimed, and that he was permitted to be an inſtrument of enlarging the Redeemer's kingdom. "Therefore" ſaith he, "I endure all things for the elect's ſake, that they may alſo obtain the ſalvation which is in Chriſt Jeſus with eternal glory."†

The faithful miniſters of the goſpel, may labour long in the vineyard without much apparent ſucceſs. They need fortitude and patience to poſſeſs their ſouls in ſuch days of diſcouragement. They have trials from the conduct of falſe profeſſors, who, after temporary fair

 appearances,

* 2 Timothy, ii. 3. † 2 Timothy, ii. 10.

appearances, become open apoſtates, and diſcover the bittereſt enmity towards chriſtianity, and its friends. Miniſters are tempted by remaining corruptions, by the example of the ungodly, and by the ſuggeſtions of Satan; to fall in with licentious opinions, to ſhun to declare the whole counſel of God, to deſpair of ſucceſs, to give over exertion, and in many other ways.

The faithful watchmen approve themſelves as the miniſters of God, by patience in their afflictions. The moſt uſeful men that God hath raiſed up in the church have been diſtinguiſhed for their fiery trials. By theſe, in connection with other means, they have been fitted for eminent uſefulneſs in the preſent life, and have been prepared to receive a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory in the world to come.

4thly. The faithful miniſters of the goſpel feel their dependence on divine grace. They are reconciled to God, and give themſelves up to him without reſerve. In this dedication they ſtand on the ſame ground with the lower members of the flock. Various as are the ways in which ſinners are brought into Chriſt's kingdom, and different as are their mental endowments, they are all brought to feel the ſame ſpirit of ſubmiſſion and dependence. They unite in diſclaiming the idea of any recommending qualifications of their own, which influenced the God of grace to make them veſſels of mercy. The moſt eminent chriſtians are the moſt humble, and abound in rendering thanks to God for the wonders of his love.

That miniſter, who does not in heart glory in the croſs of Chriſt, is liable to betray the cauſe which he profeſſedly advocates. A ſtranger to the ſpirit of vital piety, and governed by a taſte which is oppoſed to it, he cannot have a real deſire that pure and undefiled religion ſhould prevail. Though he may paſs through life without detection, he cannot eſcape the dreadful end of that ſervant who knows his Lord's will, but is never conformed to it. However accompliſhed an unſanctified

ſanctified man may be, with gifts, doctrinal knowledge, eloquence, and engaging manners, he is deſtitute of the love, which is of infinitely higher worth than an ability to ſpeak with the tongues of men and of angels. He has no reliſh for the holy beauty of divine objects, and is under the influence of a blind mind and a hard heart. He is ſo far from feeling his dependence on God, that he is under the dominion of pride; and the higher he riſes in his accompliſhments, he is at a ſtill farther remove from the ſpirit of chriſtianity.

Evangelical miniſters look up to God in fervent prayer, that he would guide them in their reſearches after truth, and give them ſkill to exhibit it, in a manner beſt ſuited to make impreſſions on the human mind; and that the word ſpoken may be ſet home on the hearts of their hearers. They pray that they may be filled with love to Chriſt, and with an ardent deſire for the converſion of ſinners. They pray "that the word of the Lord may have free courſe, and be glorified," and that the ſaints may "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt." They delight to draw near to God, and to pray for the peace of Jeruſalem. It affords them joy to behold ſinners flocking unto Chriſt; and they give the glory to God when ſinners are made obedient to the faith. Not daring to truſt to their own abilities, their zeal, or their efforts, they plead with God, that he would ſend down the influences of his ſpirit, to ſubdue the hearts of the rebellious, and to render them willing ſubjects of the prince of peace. The prophets, the apoſtles, and all the faithful ſervants of God, have felt their dependence on him, and have daily addreſſed him by prayer and thankſgiving.

Not only prayer, but every other chriſtian duty implies an acknowledgment of dependence on divine grace. All who are "working out their own ſalvation with fear and trembling," are conſcious that "it is God who worketh in them both to will and to do, of his good pleaſure."

pleaſure." The more arduous the ſervice is to which the Chriſtian is called, the more ready he is to acknowledge that his ability to perform it, is derived from above. Hence, ſaith the Apoſtle Paul, "Not that we are ſufficient of ourſelves; but our ſufficiency is of God; who alſo hath made us able miniſters of the new teſtament.* I can do all things through Chriſt, who ſtrengtheneth me."† Our Apoſtle felt that he was indebted to the mere mercy of God, for inclining him to fidelity in the church. He ſpeaketh of himſelf "as one that had obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful."‡ To the ſame ſource he aſcribed the ſtrength which carried him through his abundant labours. "By the grace of God, I am what I am: and his grace which was beſtowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

Pious miniſters aſcribe it wholly to the interpoſition of the father of mercies, that they are ſupported and comforted under their trials and temptations. Nothing but a firm and unſhaken confidence in divine grace could have dictated the apoſtle's language, "We are troubled on every ſide, yet not diſtreſſed; we are perplexed, but not in deſpair: perſecuted, but not forſaken; caſt down, but not deſtroyed.—As dying, and behold we live; as chaſtened, and not killed; as ſorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet poſſeſſing all things."—I proceed to conſider,

II. The privileges of the faithful miniſters of Jeſus Chriſt. Laborious and difficult as is the work of the evangelical miniſtry, the men, who are put into it by the head of the church, enjoy great privileges; and are, therefore, under high obligations to return thanks to Chriſt Jeſus their Lord. They have the beſt opportunity for the improvement of their own minds in knowledge and piety; they find ready acceſs to the ſociety

* 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6. † Philip. iv. 13. ‡ 1 Cor. vii. 25.

ciety of the wiſe and the good; they are put into an office of the higheſt utility to mankind; they are the chief inſtruments of extending and building up the Redeemer's kingdom; and they have the promiſe of a glorious reward.

1ſt. The miniſters of the goſpel have the beſt opportunity for the improvement of their own minds in knowledge and piety. They are taken off from the common concerns of life beyond other men, and are led from the nature of their employment, to devote themſelves to reading, meditation, and prayer. They are led to contemplate the being, attributes, character, law, government, and grace of God; and to attend to the character and ſtate of man, and to the way in which he can be reſtored to the favor of his offended Sovereign, and obtain eternal life.

What ſtudy can equal that which hath for its object the infinite mind, the relations of creatures to the ſupreme parent, the government of the univerſe, and the benevolent purpoſes of the God of love? To accompliſh the deſigns of a moral kingdom, perfect in glory and happineſs, this world was created, and is continued in exiſtence; the Son of God came down from heaven, obeyed, ſuffered, died, aroſe, and aſcended to ſit at the Father's right hand; the changes among ſtates and empires take place, and will go on, until the whole number of the elect ſhall be gathered in. Then theſe material heavens "ſhall paſs away with a great noiſe, and the elements ſhall melt with fervent heat, the earth alſo, and the works that are therein, ſhall be burnt up." How intereſting is that ſtudy, which leads us to attend to the only way in which man can riſe from the ruins of the fall, paſs in ſafety through the dangerous journey of life, and receive an immortal crown? Deſerving as he is of everlaſting wrath, the arms of divine mercy are thrown open to him, and he is commanded—he is earneſtly entreated to turn and live. What wonderful condeſcenſion and grace appear, in the conduct of Him who ſitteth on the throne

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of the univerſe! "For thus ſaith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whoſe name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place; with him alſo that is of a contrite and humble ſpirit, to revive the ſpirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite one."*

How highly favoured of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, are the men whoſe daily employment it is to ſearch the ſcriptures? and to repair to the fountain of wiſdom? They have the beſt opportunity to enrich their minds with divine knowledge, and to grow in grace. If they are actuated by the love of God, they muſt be thankful that they have been put into the miniſtry.—Their privileges will further appear, when we conſider,

2dly. The ready acceſs which they find to the ſociety of the wiſe and the good. Meſſengers from the prince of peace will, when known, be treated with reſpect and friendſhip by his ſubjects. The pious will eſteem them "that publiſh ſalvation," very highly in love for their work's ſake. The man, who delights in the miniſtry, and magnifies his office, will command reſpect from many who practically regard human ſcience as the zenith of perfection. Moſt of the learned and the poliſhed, though ſtrangers to piety, place no ſmall value on occaſional intercourſe with an enlightened clergyman. But the ſociety which the man of God prizes moſt, and the only one in which he is ſure to be always welcome, is compoſed of the real diſciples of his Lord and Maſter. However humble their ſtation may be, and however deſpiſed they may be in the eyes of the thoughtleſs and the gay, he will eſteem them to be "the excellent of the earth." As they diſcloſe to him their hopes and fears, their joys and ſorrows, he will be led to ſelf-examination, will be quickened in his duty as a chriſtian, and will be the better furniſhed for his work as a miniſter. What pleaſure is derived from the mutual communications of the exerciſes of pious minds? How ſweet and refreſhing is that intercourſe

* Iſaiah, lvii. 15.

courſe which is employed in imparting and receiving light, on ſubjects which immediately concern the peace and happineſs of the immortal ſoul? The ſociety of chriſtians bears the faireſt reſemblance, which is to be found in the preſent world, to the perfect ſociety in heaven.

The paſtor, who feedeth his flock with knowledge and underſtanding, and reliſhes the food which he ſets before others, will be thankful to the Lord Jeſus, for placing him under circumſtances, which daily remind him of the importance and excellent nature of that charity which is the bond of perfectneſs. He will reflect with holy joy on the goodneſs of the Saviour, in aſſigning to him ſo diſtinguiſhed a place in the family of the redeemed.

3dly. Miniſters of the goſpel are put into an office of the higheſt utility to mankind. The religion which they preach not only enjoins piety towards God, but it alſo inculcates juſtice, truth, mercy, compaſſion, and all the other virtues which ariſe from the relation of man to man. The ſocial virtues are clearly revealed, and ſtrongly enforced, in the inſpired volume.

Chriſtianity teacheth rulers and ſubjects their reſpective duties; and forbids oppreſſion on the one ſide, and a turbulent, factious ſpirit on the other. It forbids nations to wage war, becauſe other ſtates or kingdoms which they chooſe to invade, are weaker than themſelves, or becauſe their ſubjugation will enlarge the rule of the ſtronger. We need not be ſurpriſed when we ſee a government, which countenances impiety and debauchery at home, and rapine abroad, openly hoſtile to the Chriſtian religion, and adopting violent meaſures to expel it from the world. The benevolence of the goſpel juſtifies reſiſting lawleſs aggreſſions, and authoriſes taking away the lives of public as well as private robbers; but it denounces indignation and wrath, againſt thoſe who ſport with the lives and happineſs of mankind. Should the members of Adam's family

through

through the world, love each other according to divine command, they would throw down their weapons of ſlaughter, and become a band of brothers.

Were moral principles baniſhed from ſociety, there could be nothing ſubſtituted in their place, which would afford protection againſt the outrage of the libidinous, the avaricious, and the malevolent paſſions of men. Powerful and vigilant as the magiſtrate may be, he can be a perſonal witneſs of only a very ſmall proportion of the crimes which are committed. If the belief of a ſupreme moral governor were eradicated from the minds of men, the oaths uſed in Courts of Juſtice would ceaſe to be inſtrumental in bringing offenders to puniſhment, and in protecting the innocent. Againſt ſuch an unſpeakably dreadful ſtate of things, the religion which is from above provides a defence, by holding up an omnipreſent, an omniſcient, and a holy God, and a future world; in which all liars, and every other claſs of impenitent wicked men, will ſuffer interminable miſery, and in which the upright and the faithful will enjoy endleſs happineſs. This religion, conſtantly explained and inculcated in the congregation, on the weekly Sabbath, tends, together with the other means which God hath appointed, to impreſs the mind with the importance of moral principles, and to uphold the order, and to promote the welfare of ſociety, far beyond any, or all the efforts which human wiſdom can deviſe. Many are ſolemnized by hearing a preached goſpel, who never cordially embrace it; and they are thereby deterred from being guilty of the perjury, and the deeds of violence, which, if unreſtrained, would deſtroy all ſocial order, and turn the whole world into a field of blood.

They, who delight to wait at the Altar, will not refrain from giving thanks to him who is Lord of Lords, and King of Kings, that while they are advancing the ſpiritual and everlaſting intereſts of mankind, they are, at the ſame time, uſeful in meliorating ſociety in the preſent

preſent world; and in continuing that ſtate of things, which preſents the moſt favorable opportunity for ſecuring happineſs in the world to come.

4thly. Miniſters of the goſpel are the chief inſtruments of extending and building up the Redeemer's kingdom.

There have been public teachers in the church by divine appointment, under the diſpenſations of the old teſtament and the new. They have been employed in inſtructing, counſeling, and warning thoſe to whom they were ſent, and in urging upon them conformity to the character and will of God. The Apoſtles, and other miniſters, were uſed as the chief inſtruments in propagating the chriſtian religion, in its infancy, both among Jews and Gentiles. The Saviour commiſſioned his apoſtles, to "go into all the world, and to preach the goſpel to every creature."* He gave to them the comforting promiſe, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."† This promiſe plainly implies, that goſpel miniſters will be continued on the earth to the end of time.

The benefit of public oral inſtruction is manifeſt, from the nature of man; and experience has ſhown its ſuperior influence to any other manner of teaching. Of this the enemies of chriſtianity are ſenſible, and therefore they uſually begin their attack upon its miniſters. They are ſagacious enough to diſcern, that ſo long as public teachers conſtitute a particular order of men, and ſo long as their inſtructions are generally attended, it will be impracticable to inculcate with great ſucceſs, that the goſpel is a cunningly deviſed fable.

"If any man deſire the office of a biſhop, he deſireth a good work." The chriſtian paſtor is employed in proclaiming the good news, which was the theme of the Angelic ſong, on the birth of Chriſt, "Glory to God in the higheſt, and on earth peace, good will to men." The enlargement of the church, in the day when "the

* Mark, xvi. 15. † Matt. xxviii. 20.

earth ſhall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord," will be effected by the inſtrumentality of preachers of the goſpel, going forth among all nations. Miniſters are, indeed, but earthen veſſels, but it is the pleaſure of God that they ſhould be employed, that the excellency of the power may be of him.

How highly favoured are thoſe whom Chriſt honors, as inſtruments in proclaiming the unſearchable riches of his grace, in defending the truth againſt adverſaries, and in edifying the members of his body? With what joy muſt they be filled, when they hear the all-important enquiry from ſinners, "What muſt we do to be ſaved?" and when they behold diſciples multiplied to their Lord and Maſter? It affords them high conſolation to reflect, "that the abundant grace, through the thankſgiving of many, redounds to the glory of God."

5thly. A glorious reward is promiſed to the faithful miniſters of the goſpel. It is agreeable to the ſpirit of our holy religion, that they, who are faithful in diſcharging a high truſt, which is attended with great difficulties and dangers, ſhould have a diſtinguiſhed reward. This is ſecured to perſons of this deſcription by many particular promiſes.

The apoſtle Paul, in his addreſs to thoſe whom he had begotten through the goſpel, ſaith, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the preſence of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt at his coming."* They, who are appointed by the head of the Church to labor in word and doctrine, have as has been ſhown, many and great privileges in the preſent world, and they are animated in proſpect of the reward which will be graciouſly given them in the world to come. Soon will their trials and ſufferings be at an end, and they will ſtand before the throne of God, and ſerve him, day and night, in his temple. "When the chief ſhepherd

* 1 Theſ. ii. 19.

ſhepherd ſhall appear, they ſhall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."* What abundant cauſe have the miniſters of Jeſus Chriſt to be thankful to him for their office?

Let the ſubject to which our attention has at this time been called, ſink deeply into the hearts of all who enjoy the privileges of chriſtian paſtors. Let us, my Brethren, ſearch and try our ways, and renew the dedication of ourſelves to God in the goſpel of his Son. Are we thankful to Chriſt Jeſus, that he hath put us into the miniſtry? How have we improved our opportunities for the enlargement of our minds in divine knowledge, and for our growth in grace? Have we found high and peculiar ſatisfaction in mingling with the children of God? Have we ſtriven to meliorate the condition of ſociety, to win ſouls to Chriſt, and to build them up in the moſt holy faith? Are we willing to ſpend, and be ſpent, in labors to advance the Redeemer's kingdom? Have we a well-grounded hope of hearing the joyful ſentence addreſſed to us from the lips of the judge of the living and the dead, "Well done, good and faithful ſervant; thou haſt been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord?"

Let us give ourſelves unto prayer. Let us praiſe the Lord for his mighty acts: Let us praiſe him according to his excellent greatneſs. The occaſion of this day reminds us of our obligations to return thanks to Chriſt Jeſus our Lord, for the office given to us in his kingdom. If our hearts are warmed with divine love, we ſhall pray for one another, as well as for all men. We ſhall fervently ſupplicate that we may ſtrengthen each other's hands, and that we may not labour in vain.—Let us recommend to the grace of God, his young ſervant, who is about to take part of this miniſtry.

DEAR

* 1 Peter, v. 4.

Dear Brother,

THE preſent day is a day of high importance to you, and to this Church and Congregation. You are now to be conſecrated to the work of the Goſpel Miniſtry, and to the Paſtoral Charge of the Flock of God in this place. "*Who is ſufficient for theſe things?*" What are the feelings of your heart in view of the work on which you are now entering? You have heretofore profeſſed to give up yourſelf to God. Can you not cheerfully renew the dedication? and reſolve by divine grace to conſider yourſelf as your own no more; but as wholly devoted to Him who laid down his life that ſinners might live? Go forth, my Brother, in the ſtrength of the Lord, and he will never leave, nor forſake you. He will be with you as a Guide, and a Protector, at all times; and impreſs you with gratitude that he was pleaſed to make you a miniſter in his kingdom.

You will find no room to indulge ſloth, if you have a proper ſenſe of the vaſt field of labour which lieth before you. The further you advance in it, the greater it will appear. Lie down, and riſe up, with ſerious and devout thoughts. "I am called to watch for ſouls as one that muſt give account! How ſhall I perform the duties of my ſacred office! O thou God of grace, ſtrengthen me! Teach me how to warn the wicked, and how to ſpeak a word in ſeaſon to him that is weary; and to be faithful in all things, until I ſhall be ſummoned to appear at the judgement ſeat of Chriſt!"

Should your miniſtry be of very conſiderable length, you will meet with things which will try your faith, your fortitude and your patience. From the manner in which you endure affliction, your character will be determined "Be ſtrong in the grace that is in Chriſt Jeſus." Abound in prayer. Look up to the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good gift, and every perfect gift; and he will guide your feet into the

way

way of peace, and righteouſneſs. When you find a heart to draw near to God in your cloſet, you will find enlargement in your public performances, and in all the duties of your office.

Give yourſelf wholly to your work. Let your reading, however various, be directed in that manner which will aſſiſt you in accompliſhing yourſelf more and more, for your profeſſion. You muſt eſteem it a privilege, to be freed from intermingling with cares which belong to other employments.

The early period of life is the ſeaſon in which a foundation muſt be laid for uſefulneſs. You muſt continue to enrich your mind, or it will become more and more barren. There is no conſiderable portion of time, in which the profeſſional man, neither advances nor declines. He is not to be diſcouraged, becauſe he does not perceive his own progreſs; or becauſe he finds more difficulties attending ſubjects than he once ſaw. Well-directed mental exertion is never loſt. If you devote yourſelf to ſtudy, your profiting will *appear*. Thoſe perſons, who generally ſpeak moſt in praiſe of the talents, with which they have had the lateſt and the leaſt acquaintance, will ſoon ceaſe to applaud the man who long reſides near them; but the judicious and the candid, will perceive the proficiency which is made by the humble and ſtudious miniſter, and will pay him the juſt tribute of reſpect. You will deceive and injure yourſelf, if you look out for a ſeaſon of uninterrupted leiſure, in which you can ſit down and ſpeculate to the extent of your wiſhes. Such a ſeaſon will never come, if you faithfully devote yourſelf to the miniſtry. You muſt ſeize the paſſing moment; and acquire the ſelf-command which is neceſſary to make yourſelf maſter of your time, ſo far as this is practicable. Never think any duty of your office to be an interruption. Bear in mind that you was not born for yourſelf alone; and that, as a chriſtian, and a miniſter, you muſt place your enjoyment in the higheſt happineſs and glory of God's

moral

moral kingdom. In doing good to others, you are ſeeking *your* ſupreme good.

Fix your attention upon the great and glorious cauſe which the redeemer is carrying on, through all ages, and by all events. Your mind muſt be filled with exalted and animating thoughts, while you contemplate the wonders of infinite love. "O the depth of the riches both of the wiſdom and knowledge of God! how unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out!"

Be a companion of the followers of Chriſt, of whatever age, or rank in life. Cheerfully bear their burdens, and ſtrive to comfort their hearts. Endeavor to convince thoſe around you, by example, that "Wiſdom is juſtified of her children." This will encourage the pious, and the awakened, to open to you their exerciſes of mind, and to look up to you for counſel. A ſober walk will give a commanding dignity to your character, in the eyes of thoſe who always revile the miniſter whom they can perſuade, in any inſtance, to become vain like themſelves.

Bear open and decided teſtimony againſt error and wickedneſs; and urge ſinners to be reconciled to God. Be inceſſant and earneſt in your attempts to prevail with them to attend, without delay, to the things which belong to their ever laſting peace. Stand up in defence of the purity of the chriſtian religion, and inculcate its doctrines and laws. Strive to impreſs the minds of your hearers with the belief, that "Godlineſs is profitable unto all things, having promiſe of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Labor to convince men that the performance of the duties enjoined in the moral law, and in other particular precepts in the word of truth, is the only way to ſecure the true happineſs of individuals, of families, and of the commonwealth.

Contemplate the nature and worth of the Redeemer's kingdom, and its final victory over all its enemies.

Let

Let your heart be always warmly engaged in advancing the cauſe, which is the ultimate end of the counſels of eternity, and the operations of time. Are you not, dear Brother, thankful to Chriſt Jeſus our Lord, on this day of your conſecration, that he hath been pleaſed to open to you a door of entrance into his vineyard? Long may you labour in it, and with great ſucceſs. Be animated in proſpect of the crown of life promiſed to the faithful. God grant that you may be an inſtrument of turning many to righteouſneſs, and that you may ſhine as the brightneſs of the firmament, and as the ſtars forever and ever.

This Church and Congregation, are called to return thanks unto the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that he hath watched over them ſince they have been deprived of the public labors of their aged Paſtor, and hath been pleaſed to unite them in the choice of his ſervant to take the charge of them, who is now to be ſet apart to the ſacred office. We hope, Brethren and Friends, that he will prove a rich bleſſing to you, and to your children, and that his miniſtry may be of long continuance.

He will, we doubt not, inculcate by counſel and example, the reſpectful and affectionate treatment which is due to your aged Paſtor, who, from his youth, hath ſerved you in the Goſpel. The tender feelings of this venerable father muſt be awakened on the preſent occaſion. Your welfare lies near his heart. He will continue to ſeek your higheſt happineſs, and will pray for you, to the cloſe of his life. May he be comforted through the momentary remnant of his days, by witneſſing more than ever, the diffuſion of evangelical piety among the people of his charge. Realizing that the time of his departure is at hand, may he be ripened to receive the crown of righteouſneſs which the Lord, the righteous Jndge, will give unto all them who love his appearing.

Undiſſembled love to the chriſtian religion, is always accompanied

accompanied with the eſteem of thoſe who are its faith ful miniſters. As they are thankful to Chriſt Jeſus for their office, their conduct will endear them to his real diſciples. The benevolent and arduous nature of the work aſſigned to chriſtian paſtors, infers high obligation on the part of thoſe who are committed to their charge, to treat the men who watch for their ſouls with reſpect and tenderneſs; and to endeavour to prevent them from being entangled with the affairs of this life, that they may give themſelves wholly to the miniſtry.

Maintain a free and friendly intercourſe with your paſtor; that he may be placed under the beſt circumſtances, to promote your ſpiritual and everlaſting good. Strive to lighten his burdens, and to comfort his heart. Encourage him by a conſtant attendance on public worſhip. A ſpirit of prayer will lead you to remember him at the throne of grace. Unite your endeavors with his for the ſupport of harmony and order. As you would deſire him to be faithful to his truſt, lay no temptations before him to handle the word of God deceitfully. Be willing that he ſhould commend himſelf to every man's conſcience in the ſight of God.

Let thoſe, who are under covenant bonds in particular, manifeſt a firm attachment "to the doctrine which is according to godlineſs." Brethren, "let your converſation be as it becometh the goſpel of Chriſt." Recommend the holy religion which you profeſs, by humble, holy, and heavenly lives. May He, who walketh in the midſt of the golden candleſticks, and holdeth the ſtars in his right hand, dwell with you by his gracious preſence. While you are praying that Chriſt's kingdom may come, may the holy ſpirit deſcend, in his awakening, convincing, and renewing influences; and may much people here be added unto the Lord. May your hearts be eſtabliſhed unblameable in holineſs before God, even our Father, at the coming of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt with all his ſaints.

Let every individual in this numerous audience reflect

flect on the worth of his ſoul, on the deſign of Chriſt's coming into the world, and on the infinite importance of being reconciled to God. Let the ſtupid ſinner wake up, and realize that he cannot eſcape if he continues to neglect the great ſalvation. Is any one ſeeking to quiet his conſcience in ſin, by indulging a cavelling temper againſt the religion which is from above, let him no longer be governed by an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. Is any one alarmed with fearful apprehenſions of the wrath to come, let him feel that he is under high and peculiar obligations to ſubmit to the bleſſed Redeemer. Is any one oppreſſed with ſo deep a ſenſe of his guilt as to be on the borders of deſpair, let him recal the inſtance of Saul of Tarſus, who obtained mercy, that in him Jeſus Chriſt might ſhew forth all long-ſuffering, for a pattern to them who ſhould hereafter believe on him to life everlaſting. He was among the chief of ſinners, but was made a monument of divine grace. The religion of Jeſus Chriſt became the delight of his ſoul; and he is now among the ſaints in heaven, ſinging the new ſong of redeeming love.

Reflect, *Dear Youth*, on the ſurprizing difference which appeared in the young man Saul, when he became a follower of the Son of God. He was highly accompliſhed in the learning and polite manners of the age in which he lived; but he eſteemed his former attainments as comparatively nothing, after he was made a ſubject of ſaving knowledge. Like him count all things but loſs for the excellency of the knowledge of Jeſus Chriſt. If you become real chriſtians, you will find a peace and a joy unknown to the diſſipated and the vain. The occaſion of this day, holds up before you the infinite worth and glory of the Redeemer's kingdom. How will it rejoice the hearts of the godly to behold you preſſing into it? You are the hope of the commonwealth, and of the Church of God. Oh! may you be much more faithful in ſerving God and your generation, than we have been who are about to go

the way of all the earth! Not a few of your years, in various parts of this land, have of late, been hopefully renewed in the ſpirit of their minds. Piety and virtue are the only defence againſt the ſnares and temptations of the world, and confer charms which will never fade. Give yourſelves up to God, and he will be your Father and portion, in time and eternity.

Who, and how many, of the old or the young, in this Aſſembly, are on the Lord's ſide, is known to him. He ſearcheth the reins and the hearts, and will give unto every one according to his works. Ye ſervants of the Moſt High God, pray without ceaſing, that his great and holy name may be magnified forever. Preſent your ſupplications before him for the effuſions of his Spirit. Return thanks to the glorious Redeemer for the wonder of his grace. He will continue, to the end of time, to raiſe up inſtruments for the ingathering of ſouls into his kingdom, and for their growth in piety until they are matured for the heavenly world. While you have ſeen the enemy coming in like a flood, you have beheld the ſpirit of the Lord lifting up a ſtandard againſt him. "Thy way, O God, is in the ſanctuary: who is ſo great a God as our God? Thou art the God that doeſt wonders; thou haſt declared thy ſtrength among the people."

Let us all preſent remember, that death is at hand, and that the moment is ſwiftly approaching, when we ſhall be fixed in endleſs happineſs, or endleſs miſery. We, with the whole race of Adam, muſt appear before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt, at his ſecond coming; when every one, ſmall and great, will be judged, and ſentenced for eternity. May we all be found of our Judge in peace, and unite in the praiſe—"Bleſſing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that ſitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever."—*Amen.*

THE

CHARGE.

By the REV. *COTTON M. SMITH,*
Paſtor of the Church in Sharon.

REVEREND & DEAR BROTHER,

YOU have been ſolemnly ſet apart to the work of the goſpel miniſtry, by faſting and prayer with the laying on the hands of the Preſbytery. And you have, agreeable to the call of God in his providence, taken upon yourſelf, the care and charge of this flock of Chriſt as a colleague and fellow labourer with the aged Paſtor of this Church, who has long laboured in this vineyard of our common Lord.

I do, therefore, agreeable to apoſtolic direction and ancient cuſtom, in the name and behalf of this venerable council, being thereunto appointed, ſolemnly exhort and charge you to a faithful diſcharge of the duties of your office.

We charge you before God and the Lord Jeſus, who ſhall Judge both the quick and the dead, at his appearing and kingdom, preach thou the word, be inſtant in ſeaſon and out of ſeaſon, reprove and rebuke with all long ſuffering and doctrine. And that you

may

may be enabled to diſcharge the duties of the evangelical miniſtry, faithfully and ſucceſsfully, give thyſelf to reading, to ſtudy, to meditation and prayer. Be much in prayer to the great head of the Church, that you may be aſſiſted and ſtrengthened to the ſolemn and important work, whereunto thou art called, and not ſhun to declare the whole counſel of God, but come to this people from time to time, in the fullneſs of the bleſſiug of the goſpel of peace. Likewiſe pray for the aged Paſtor of this Church, that God would ſupport and comfort him, in the decline of life; and be always ready to afford him your counſel and aſſiſtance, as often as he ſhall requeſt it of you—and receive inſtructions from him, in all matters relating to the peace and proſperity of this Church and Congregation.

Moreover pray for this Church and Congregation, over which you are appointed a goſpel Biſhop. Behold the people, committed to your care; conſider the worth of their ſouls, and the great price paid for their redemption, and of how much importance that you labour for their ſalvation; that ſo you may anticipate with heart felt joy, the pleaſure and ſatisfaction of one day meeting them at the right hand of your judge, when you will be enabled to ſay, here Lord am I and the people of my charge.

See that you adminiſter the ſeals of the covenant of grace, to ſuch as ſhall be the proper ſubjects, and that you exerciſe the rod of diſcipline upon delinquents.

We charge you before God and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt and the elect Angels, that thou obſerve theſe things, without prefering one before another, doing nothing by partiality. And when ever you ſhall be called to the ſetting apart men to the goſpel miniſtry, lay hands ſuddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's ſins: Keep thyſelf pure—But commit theſe things to faithful men that ſhall be able to teach others alſo; not to a novice, leſt being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

Dear

Dear Brother,

You muſt expect, in the courſe of your miniſtry, to meet with oppoſition, from men of corrupt minds, concerning the faith reprobate, for the ſcripture ſpeaketh expreſsly that in the latter days ſome ſhall depart from the faith, giving heed to ſeducing ſpirits and doctrines of devils, and as Jannes and Jambres withſtood Moſes, ſo theſe men will reſiſt the truth, and yourſelf in delivering it—but ſet your face as a flint, arm yourſelf with chriſtian courage and confidence, fight manfully under the banners of the great Captain of your ſalvation; be not aſhamed of the goſpel of Chriſt, but contend for the faith once delivered to the ſaints—not for ſtrife or vain glory, but in wiſdom, in meekneſs, chriſtian condeſcenſion, and candour; for the ſervant of the Lord muſt not ſtrive, but be gentle towards all men, in meekneſs, inſtructing thoſe who oppoſe themſelves, if peradventure God ſhould give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth, that they may recover themſelves, from the ſnares of the Devil, who are led captive by him at his will.

In all things ſhewing thyſelf a pattern of good works, in doctrine, uncorruptneſs, gravity, ſound ſpeech that cannot be condemned, that ſo he who is of the contrary part may be aſhamed, having no evil thing to ſay of thee. Watch thou, therefore, in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of the Lord faithfully and make full proof of thy miniſtry.

See that you recommend, both in your preaching, your converſation and example, the chriſtian, the ſocial and the moral virtues. Exhort ſubjects to obey magiſtrates as miniſters of God for good—and children to be obedient unto their parents—and parents to inſtruct their children in the doctrines and duties of our holy religion, and to bring them up in the nurture, the fear, and admonition of the Lord. Likewiſe exhort ſervants to be obedient to their maſters, as unto Chriſt; and maſters to treat their ſervants with humanity, to

forbear

forbear threatening, remembering they have a maſter in heaven, with whom there is no reſpect of perſons. You will likewiſe remind thoſe who have believed in God, that they be careful to maintain good works, for theſe things are profitable unto men.

If thou put the Brethren in remembrance of theſe things, thou ſhalt be a good miniſter of Jeſus Chriſt, nouriſhed up in the words of faith and good doctrine, and when the chief ſhepherd ſhall appear, you ſhall receive a crown of righteouſneſs that ſhall never fade away—*Amen.*

THE

Right Hand of Fellowſhip.

By Rev. SOLOMON WILLIAMS,
Paſtor of the Church in Northampton.

THE everlaſting Goſpel of the bleſſed God only reveals the plan of mercy. We know; for God hath told us of it; and it is impoſſible that he ſhould lie; that God hath ſo loved the world, that he gave his beloved Son to redeem it: and that thoſe, who receive the atonement, might have life, and that life more abundantly. We contemplate, admire, and feaſt our ſouls upon divine love. While we adore it, we are conſtrained to exclaim rapturouſly, oh the breadth and length, the depth and height of the love of God in Chriſt

Chriſt! If then God ſo love us, how ought we to love one another? If the Father loveth the Son and the Son loveth the Father: If they are one in their deſigns and operations, their joy and affection; and if this affection appears peculiarly ſtrong; this harmony exceedingly glorious in the work of Redemption, how ſuitable is it that the chriſtian miniſtry ſhould be knit together in love? When they are brethren, fellow laborers and co-workers in the kingdom of their common and divine Lord, how beneficial, how requiſite is it that they ſhould unite their views, their meaſures and labors in effecting the important objects of their miniſtry? How requiſite the cloſeſt union in the nobleſt and moſt benevolent work when ſo many unite to diſcourage, afflict and defeat them? No wonder that James, Cephas and John, who ſeemed to be the pillars of the primitive Church, gave to thoſe excellent miniſters, Paul and Barnabas, the right hands of Fellowſhip, when going to the heathen; expreſſive of their cordiality towards them; of their approbation of their deſign: of their deſire of ſucceſs, and of their readineſs and purpoſe to co-operate with them. In conformity to this Apoſtolic example, and the immemorial practice of our Churches on ſimilar occaſions, according to the direction and at the deſire of this Eccleſiaſtical Council, I do now, Reverend and Dear Sir, with much ſatisfaction, give you this Right Hand of Fellowſhip. By which ſignificant token you will underſtand that we acknowledge you as a brother in the Goſpel Miniſtry. We approve of your Ordination in this place. By it we expreſs our love and eſteem for you, our delight and confidence in you. By it we declare our purpoſe, as we have opportunity, and you need and requeſt it, to afford you our chriſtian advice and ſupport in thoſe things which reſpect your miniſtry. We doubt not of your love and eſteem for this venerable man of God, the Rev. Mr. Judd, with whom you are joined as Colleague Paſtor: That you will ſerve with him as a Son with a Father.

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On our part, Dear Brother, for ſuch let me now addreſs you, we deſire and expect ſimilar offices of kindneſs under the various circumſtances in which we may be placed: may our mutual brotherly affection grow with life; let ſolid fruits prove it and may it be made perfect in heaven.

BRETHREN OF THIS CHURCH, this Goſpel rite reminds you alſo of the relation which ſubſiſts between you and our reſpective Churches. It is a pledge of the tender, the ſincere, the active and effectual part which we ſhall take in your fears and dangers, your changes and trials, your ſorrows and joys, your growth and decline. It ſuggeſts our expectation and hope of your ready and cheerful exertions in our behalf. Brethren, we congratulate you on this ſolemn, this intereſting and joyful occaſion; on the reception of this aſcenſion gift of Chriſt: on the introduction of this our brother into this part of the vineyard. May you, dearly beloved, and this chriſtian congregation and your new Paſtor live in love; know how good and how pleaſant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. May the means of religious inſtruction be duly appreciated by you, and may your ſpiritual improvement be proportioned to your advantages. May your love of one another, and of the Iſrael of God, and of God our Father, and of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, be habitually growing until you come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt.

And may this large and reſpectable chriſtian audience, be kept in the faith of Chriſt, and the love of God, and in the love of one another, of all ſaints and of all men; and in a patient waiting, through obedience to the truth, for the mercy of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt unto eternal life.

FINIS.